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snapped off (and later stuck back on with sellotape, which drew more attention to the breaks).

The mountain scene has a small two foot barrier and beyond this is a replica mountain with birds and flowers. The plant models were all made of wax and had been crushed, some taken out and lost, some left where they were. A ring ouzel was taken and has not yet been recovered.

Other areas that are low down, badly lit or out of view of the warder seem to be the most likely to experience vandalism and theft. A small diorama adjacent to the mountain scene had an adder curled up in the foreground. This was so frequently damaged that the conservator removed it from display. A rabbit from the same scene has now been moved to the very back of the display to prevent further damage.

The majority of displays are in glass cases, however the success of the galleries is undoubtedly due to the life-like and impressive dioramas. The fact that they are drawing so much attention, if not a little too much physical attention, indicates that they are at least getting a message across and firing

the curiosity. The mindless destruction is thankfully rare and does not go undetected. The damage made by the teenage group was quickly picked up on, but it did raise the question of putting security cameras in all the galleries. As a similar incident has not happened since, it was believed to be purely opportunist on the teenagers' part, acting on the fact there was only one warder present that day.

*Victoria Purewal
Botanical Conservator
NMGW*

Theft from Hampshire County Museums Service

The problem with complete strangers wandering round a site with the appearance of knowing what they're doing can often be a problem to staff who may not wish or be bothered in challenging them. Uniforms or official looking overalls can also discourage challenges until something goes missing. In this case it was a credit card of a member of staff. Since then security has tightened up considerably and even well-known visitors are not free to wander around the site and putting extra burdens on staff who do not feel the need to accompany their visitors to the loos or staff room for tea. Ah well no doubt the usual tight schedules mixed with the inevitable no incident apathy will mean that the usual laxity will soon return? I hope not but I do hope that our trustees will have a little more freedom!

Once of the problems of being situated near 'privileged housing' (council estate) is groups of children trying their luck at tossing pebbles at windows or loosening nuts on overnight-parked vehicles. About a year ago our site manager was physically threatened by a not

so young 'child' after he asked him and his followers to refrain from trespassing on the site and testing the 'breakability' of the windows. After some police involvement the matter has not re-occurred. However both instances show the need to stay alert!

*Simon Moore
Hampshire County Museums*

Lightning Strikes Twice?

In July 1990 a young woman walked into Liverpool Museum, smashed a display case on the Egyptian gallery with a cobble stone and removed an artefact. She put the item into her handbag but made no serious attempt to escape with it. The artefact was the mummified hand of a woman, thought to have been a high priestess, from Saqqara, dating from the Ptolemaic (Roman) period, 332-30 BC (M11438)(¹). The hand is covered with a brittle black bituminous resin partly coated with gold leaf and has four gold and lapis lazuli rings on the fingers. It has a high monetary value. It is unlikely, however, that the hand was targeted for

materialistic motives. The woman seemed drawn to this item from some more abstruse 'reasoning' - having gained possession of the hand she sat down on the floor, made no attempt to evade arrest or deny culpability and said not a word to anyone.

The gallery was cleared of visitors immediately and the affected display case and surrounding area were left untouched until a conservator (myself) arrived at the scene. The area was photographed, all artefacts were removed from the case to the curator's office and debris in the display case and on the floor was checked for fragments of artefacts. The artefacts were carefully examined, reported on and individually photographed. The thumb nail from the hand was dislodged and had to be re-adhered (using Paraloid B72 methyl methacrylate adhesive). Other artefacts in the case (all grave goods) included stone canopic jars and small wooden items. Many were chipped and scuffed but it was difficult to assess whether new damage had occurred due to the absence of any previous condition reports or photographs - the items had been displayed for about 20 years.

We will probably never know why this happened, but how did it happen? What security measures were in place?

- We have a bag check for all visitors coming into the museum, generally carried out quite cursorily. Should we embarrass and delay visitors by removing every item from their bags? If not, it is easy enough for a knife, a small can of spray paint, a hammer or even a set to be concealed.
- We did not at this time have a cloak room where visitors could leave bags. But cloakrooms do cost money and space (attendants, rails, lockers, etc.) and, more importantly, could increase the possibility of bomb threats.
- We do have attendant staff on the galleries - but funding cuts mean we now have only one attendant on each floor and given the size and particularly the layout of our galleries this inevitably means all areas can not be guarded constantly.
- The display case itself is reasonably secure (solid wooden base, glass top and

front, built against a back wall and adjoining other similar cases) - we need a team of joiners to remove the glass. This was irrelevant to the culprit, evidently not a practised art thief, who was obviously not concerned with stealth, her own safety nor keeping the artefacts intact.

- The case was not alarmed, but what if it had been? The damage would have been done before the alarm went off, and the culprit was not going anywhere anyway.
- What about the glass - it was not toughened glass, it was not laminated, it was old. It was easy enough to smash. Perhaps this is where we can most economically strengthen our defences.

In fact, considering this as a one-off incident, an isolated case, a freak occurrence, the most sensible thing would be to lobby for more staff on the galleries but otherwise keep our fingers well away from the panic button. As Jonathan Ashley-Smith has pointed out "Theoretically, there is no minimum risk but, in practice, there are diminishing returns in the effort needed to

reduce the risk."(2). After all, what are the chances of something similar happening again in the next, say, hundred years?

Well actually ...

... In July 1997 the same woman repeated the act, targeting the same item, this time taking a hammer to the display case instead of a set. Strangely enough, the thumb nail was again displaced. Despite searches of the trolley, the gallery floor, the display case, nearby surfaces and the box of swept up glass and other debris, it was not found.

Hmmm ... ok, so maybe we do need to take a little more interest.

In the current (and ongoing) climate of funding cuts it is unrealistic to expect **all** museums to provide state-of-the-art security for all items on display (and those in store), but are there categories of artefacts other than the most valuable and the rarest that we should give enhanced protection to? What are those categories?

What do people attack in museums and galleries? - It is difficult to tell until they do it. We can sometimes get a clue by asking the question - Why do people attack artefacts? To some extent we can anticipate attacks which might be based on

political or religious fervour. But our experience outlined here illustrates that objects can be damaged out of much less obvious motives - perhaps based on some personal conflict, insanity, anger at society in general, a simple demand for attention. Who knows? It is not even strictly speaking correct to term the above incidents acts of vandalism - the damage caused was obviously not wilful; nor were there attempts at theft; apparently just misguided attempts to achieve contact with a coveted item. We can not predict human behaviour in cases like this. But perhaps more openness and greater circulation of information around the museum world might give us some clues. Anyone feel like organising a conference?

*Tracey Seddon
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The Conservation Centre, NMGM*

References

1. Bienkowski, Piotr and Angela M J Tooley
Gifts of the Nile, Ancient Egyptian Arts and Crafts in Liverpool Museum. NMGM. HMSO. London 1995. Illustration p 56

2. Ashley-Smith, Jonathan
Consider the Benefits, Calculate the Risks. Talk given at a joint meeting of ICOM-CC, the conservation committee of the International Council of Museums and ICEE, the International Committee for Exhibition Exchange, in a session called "Exhibition or Destruction", ICOM general meeting. Stavanger, Norway, July 5 1995. Unpublished. On Internet. p8.



Safety Film in Display Areas

In 1992 new health and safety regulations concerning glazing came into force, which had an immediate effect on museums. The regulations affect public, stall areas and stores, and concern doors, barriers, display cases and windows.

The Ipswich Museum building in High Street contains a wide variety of cases, dating from the 1880's to the present. There is an enormous area of exposed glass. The glazing is a combination of spun (early cases), float, toughened and laminated glass, ranging from about

2.5mm to 7mm thick. The two largest areas are the "Jungle case" with an area of 22.7 m² and the Giraffe case (erected in 1909) with an area of 67.5 m². This is believed to be the largest single, glazed, mounted specimen in the UK.

Although there have been few acts of vandalism in recent years, there is still the risk of an accidental breakage of glass cases. In the most recent event two years ago a 2.5mm thick pane cracked in an 1881 wall case, when a visitor leant their head on it "to get a better view of the objects". However, all cases installed since 1992 are glazed in toughened glass, which is visibly marked to show that it conforms to BS6206.

The following is an extract from the 1992 Health Safety and Welfare regulations concerning glazing,

Windows, and transparent or translucent doors, gates and walls.

(1) Every window or other transparent or translucent surface in a wall or partition and every transparent surface in a door or gate, shall where necessary for reasons of health or safety -

(a) be of safety material or be protected against breakage of the transparent or translucent material; and...

(b) be appropriately marked or incorporate features so as, in either case, to make it apparent, with reasons. A risk assessment and survey of the museum divided the glass into three categories: high, medium and low. All glass has to show the safety mark.

147 Transparent or translucent surfaces in doors, gates and walls and partitions should be of safety material or be adequately protected against breakage in the following cases:

(a) in doors and gates, and door and gate side panels, where any part of the transparent or translucent surface is at shoulder level or below.

(b) in windows, walls or partitions, where any part of the transparent or translucent surface is at waist level or below, except in glass houses where people there will be aware of the presence of glazing and avoid contact. This paragraph does not apply to narrow panes up to 250mm wide measured between glazing beads.